



Environmental Committee

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Checkout Bag Tax Act

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Position Statement:

The Iowa Youth Congress supports legislation that levies a 5-cent tax on all single-use bags to stymie wastage, pollution, and environmental degradation, remitting all raised revenues to the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Position:

- The proposed legislation amends Iowa Code Section 331.301, subsection 6 c. (1) and Iowa Code Section 364.3, subsection 3 c. (1) to remove the preemptive ban Iowa counties and cities from taxing or banning single-use bags.
- The proposed Checkout Bag Tax Act modeled after legislation from Illinois also enacts a new law, implementing a five-cent tax per every single-use plastic, paper, or compostable bag consumed at retailer stores in Iowa.
- Of the 5-cent tax per bag, 2 cents will be remitted to the Department of Natural Resources and 3 cents will be remitted to the Department of Education to fund education and environmental conservation efforts in Iowa.
- The proposed legislation can be likened to Iowa's "Bottle Bill," but it is for single-use bags.
- For sample language of the proposed legislation, visit <https://tinyurl.com/ss43wfw>.

Current Situation:

- Single-use bag consumption in Iowa is substantial: over 550 million plastic bags were used in Iowa's grocery industry in 2018 alone (Danielson, 2019).
- Disposal of single-use bags in Iowa has increased in recent years. According to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, plastic film, wrap, and bags have become the second-largest category of items occupying 15 different landfills across the state, increasing in amount by 15 percent between 2011 and 2017 (Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 2017).
- For more information on the gravity of the current situation in Iowa regarding the consumption, wastage, and pollution of single-use bags, visit <https://tinyurl.com/ss43wfw>.

Rationale:

- Every year, approximately 8 million metric tons of plastic enter Earth's oceans (Le Guern, 2019). By taxing the usage of single-use bags, the proposed legislation would discourage their usage. This would make Iowa an active player in combating the pollution caused by single-use bags. Further, it would also make Iowa a cleaner state with less single-use bags in streets and ditches.
- According to National Geographic, plastic bags can take over 400 years to degrade (Kilen, 2018). The longevity of plastic bags, according to the Des Moines Register, enables just one plastic bag to harm and kill multiple animals (Kilen, 2018). By discouraging the usage of single-use bags, the proposed legislation would make Iowa an active player in undermining the adverse environmental consequences of the pollution of single-use bags.

- According to the Des Moines Register, the United States collectively discards one hundred billion plastic bags annually (Rood, 2017). The proposed legislation would make Iowa an active player in discouraging the extensive consumption or usage of single-use bags across the United States.
- In addition to all of the aforementioned environmental benefits of the proposed legislation, the tax would also benefit education and environmental conservation efforts in Iowa by providing funds to the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.
- To read the substantial success of similar legislation in decreasing single-use bag consumption, wastage, and pollution in other cities, counties, states, and countries, visit <https://tinyurl.com/ss43wfw>.

Recommended Action:

- The proposed legislation, as documented in other cities, counties, states, and countries, is effective at decreasing the consumption, wastage, and pollution of single-use bags. Therefore, the proposed legislation will make Iowa not only a cleaner state but also an active contributor in the fight against environmental degradation. Further, the proposed legislation will support education and conservation efforts in Iowa. In pursuit of a cleaner and more environmentally-friendly state, the Iowa Youth Congress supports legislation that levies a 5-cent tax on all single-use bags to stymie wastage, pollution, and environmental degradation, remitting all raised revenues to the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.
- Please note: this is an abridged position statement. In the full version, the Iowa Youth Congress provides more in-depth insight into the specifics of the proposed legislation and its necessity. In the full version, we explicate the extent of single-use bag consumption, wastage, and pollution in Iowa. We also more fully analyze the role Iowa plays in contributing to environmental degradation around the world. Further, we provide more thorough research on the effectiveness of similar legislation in other cities, counties, states, and countries. Finally, we also provide sample language for the proposed legislation. To access the full version of this position statement, please consult the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ss43wfw>.

Sources:

Danielson, D. (2009). Effort underway to cut back on plastic grocery bags. Retrieved from www.radioiowa.com/2009/08/27/effort-underway-to-cut-back-on-plastic-grocery-bags/

Iowa Department of Natural Resources (2017). DNR releases 2017 Iowa statewide waste characterization study; Food waste and plastics top the list. Retrieved from www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/DNR-News-Releases/ArticleID/1674/DNR-releases-2017-Iowa-Statewide-Waste-Characterization-Study-food-waste-and-plastics-top-the-list

Kilen, M. (2018). Plastic problem: What one tiny Iowa town did to combat it, and how yours ranks. Retrieved from www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2018/05/02/earth-month-plastic-bags-pollution-grimes-alleman-iowa-mwa/573983002/

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